



# KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

## NEWS RELEASE

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## **NEW MEMBERS JOIN KENTUCKY BOARD OF EDUCATION; MEETING FOCUSES ON ACCOUNTABILITY**

(FRANKFORT, Ky.) – Five new members assumed their seats on the Kentucky Board of Education today.

Frankfort District Court Judge Chris Olds administered the oath of office to:

- Ben Cundiff, a chemical engineer and an attorney from Cadiz
- Gary W. Houchens, who is from Bowling Green and an associate professor in the Department of Educational Administration, Leadership and Research at Western Kentucky University
- Alesa G. Johnson, who is from Somerset and an electrical engineer and associate dean for Workforce Solutions at Somerset Community College
- Rich Gimmel, chair of Atlas Machine and Supply, Inc. in Louisville
- Milton C. Seymore of Louisville. He is retired from Ford Motor Company and currently serves as pastor of Energized Baptist Church.

In his report, Commissioner Stephen Pruitt shared a [letter](#) with the board that he sent to the United States Department of Education (USED) taking exception to its change on the state's administration of science tests and also a proposal that would require the state to identify the lowest performing schools for a new accountability system using data from the old system.

"What they are requiring is about compliance, not about what's best for kids," Pruitt said. "We needed to fire a shot over the bow.

"There's not been any word back. I don't know that we will get any response. I probably should warn everybody that we probably will end up on some list somewhere. We are out of compliance.

"To me it was against the integrity of our agency and this Commonwealth to do anything differently. As the chief state school officer, it's my responsibility to make some hard decisions but most of all to protect the kids of this Commonwealth," Pruitt said

On a related matter, Pruitt and Associate Commissioner Rhonda Sims reported on the development of a new accountability system under the federal [Every Student Succeeds Act](#). They summarized feedback from the education Town Hall Meetings held this spring. Overarching themes included:

- Our children must be at the heart of the system.
- A well-rounded education is important and necessary.
- All subjects, both tested and non-tested, need to be valued.

(more)

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- Access and opportunity for students are critical.
- An emphasis on teaching is needed.
- Collaboration instead of competition among schools and districts needs to be the focus.

Pruitt outlined the process for the development of a new system. The Accountability Steering Committee is charged with making recommendations to the board. The steering committee met last week and agreed on several principles that will guide its work moving forward:

- The system should focus on the welfare of all students and promote good decision making for their benefit.
- The system should promote a holistic and quality education for all students.
- The system should reflect the Kentucky Department of Education's guiding principles of equity, achievement and integrity.
- The system should be simple and easy to understand.
- Data should be reported in a dashboard that better illustrates school/district progress or deficits than a single number.

"Staying with the status quo is not good enough for the Commonwealth," Pruitt said. "We need a system that will generate better outcomes for all of our kids and will support the economic development of Kentucky."

The board will receive regular updates on the accountability work.

Also during today's meeting, Commissioner Pruitt delivered summaries from extensive on-site reviews of the instructional, intervention and special education services at the [Kentucky School for the Blind \(KSB\)](#) and the [Kentucky School for the Deaf \(KSD\)](#). At each school, the report notes several areas of non-compliance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). In addition to the KDE review, external partners conducted a review of instructional practices and identified both strengths and areas for growth. KDE issued an all-encompassing Corrective Action plan for each school. KSB must complete its plan by February 2017. KSD must complete its plan by May 2017.

In addition, the board received updates on the Teaching, Empowering, Leading and Learning ([TELL](#)) [Kentucky Survey Results and work](#), [the Teach Kentucky program](#), [2016 legislation](#) and the enacted [2016-18 biennial budget](#).

In other business, the board approved:

- KY Tech Certified Evaluation Plan
- 703 KAR 4:041, Repeal of 703 KAR 4:040, Interim Methods for Verifying Successful Completion of the Primary Program
- 704 KAR 3:342, Repeal of 704 KAR 3:340, Commonwealth Diploma
- The appointment of Nina Coyer to Kentucky School for the Deaf (KSD) Advisory Board. Coyer is the president of the Kentucky Association for the Deaf.
- 2016-17 Preschool Grant Allotment System and Funding Rates
- Removing Danville Independent from District of Innovation probation status
- Voluntary Certification of Non-Public Schools
- An Alternative Model of School-Based Decision Making (SBDM) for Berea Community Middle and High School

(more)

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- New District Facility Plans for Caldwell County, Erlanger-Elsmere Independent, Graves County, Livingston County, Marshall County, and Perry County
- 2017 Kentucky Minimum Specifications for School Buses
- School District Indirect Cost Rates for Fiscal Year 2016-17
- The 2015 Report, 2015 Exceptions and 2017 Plan as Required by 702 KAR 1:115, Annual In-service Training of District Board Members
- Authorization for the KDE General Counsel to draft and send a letter to those local board members, who were not granted exceptions for training requirements, giving them a deadline to meet those requirements or being reported to the Attorney General
- 702 KAR 7:065, Designation of Agent to Manage Middle and High School Interscholastic Athletics and Revisions in Kentucky High School Athletic Association (KHSAA) Bylaws
- Capital Funds Request Guidelines

Support materials for the board meeting are available online at

<http://portal.ksba.org/public/Agency.aspx?PublicAgencyID=4388&AgencyTypeID=1>.

The board is next scheduled to meet August 3 and 4 in Frankfort for its annual retreat and regular meeting.

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